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The Plantation Mentality

Editorial

Cultural Nationalism: The Black Novel and the City

ADDISON GAYLE, JR



Spade Drop-Out

CLEBERT FORD

Theatre Review

CLAYTON RILEY

LIBERATOR

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Cover photo by: Steve Gadler

The Plantation Mentality

We are there... yes, witnesses all to the white guilt-ridden anti-poverty programs becoming the spoils over which brother is pitted against brother and for which the blood of so many of our good people is being senselessly and needlessly spilled. Oh, it is so easy for us to destroy our own -- we are the "baddest mothers" when it comes to taking off another brother, but when we are confronted with the enemy, *we* equivocate, *we* cop out. Brothers and sisters, the man may or may not care whether we live or die, but he does care about his money. So he is getting his thing together on the anti-poverty programs. Very soon there won't be any bread to fight over.

How far have we really traveled from the ole plantation, from the days of our being almost totally dependent upon the great white father... the days when we would squeal on a brother in order to make it from the fields to the big house so as to be "rewarded" with that coveted title of "house nigger"? Considering the amount of blood we have wasted and are now wasting in this fratricidal warfare of gunning down brothers in the streets of this hate-filled land, it doesn't seem that we have progressed much in the last three centuries. Oh yes, we do have "our thing": our Afros (we don't even have to buy the wigs uptown anymore); our own clothing styles (already opted by Macy's and Saks Fifth Avenue department stores); our speech patterns (which are being relentlessly pursued by hungry white professors with tape recorders). We have rapped the way no other people have rapped against the man, but in reality what have we really accomplished? What do we own, what can we present to our children with pride, what institutions are we building that will have lasting values for our people?

The history of the world is replete with fragments of lost races and civilizations that didn't build lasting institutions. History, remember, recorded the names of the Pharaohs as the builders of the Egyptian pyramids, not the names of the thousands of slaves who toiled to erect the monuments.

Our choice is rather simple: Shall we be Pharaohs or slaves?

--- DANIEL H. WATTS

EUROPEAN DIARY

August 1964

Dropped out and split to Europe after selling or giving away furniture, sides, box, books, leaving unpaid bills, friends and family, the "movement" in flux. 1964...the Harlem and Brooklyn riots (prelude to Watts the following summer. New York still the "first" city). *The Blacks* again. A one-week European tour, the Berlin "Black" Festival, and the Festival di Prosa in Venice (how many spade actors had survived on the strength of this gig? And why not a revival? Genet ain't no spade, but a whole lot of truths were being said back then). '64... "Freedom Summer," and heads being whipped, and death, and nonviolence (???) in "sleepy, dusty delta" towns. Please forgive me, you three lovely young ladies (integrated); on the eve of our respective departures -- you to the battlefields of

absolute necessity of self-defence in the South (New York City was "CORE Country" back then), and wore hair "natural." Dig it. As a substitute teacher at J.H.S. 139 in Harlem, how many times I would hear the kids shouting "Get a haircut, teach!" as I monitored the halls between periods.

'64, then, a turning point. I mean it was still ofay (honky? pig?) chicks sporting their Black warriors' SNCC buttons precisely as so many World War II mothers had hung gold stars in their windows. And there was that "guilt pussy" around, from all those nice young Jewish girls (WASPs weren't giving up shit, as always), and "soul" singing at the Limelight on Sheridan Square, and integrated parties (folk songs, wine, grass, strange uptown spades, and, inevitably, missing wallets and pocketbooks). Are those ofay (honky? pig?) chicks



Calvin Wilson

Clebert Ford (left) in a scene from "The Blacks"

Mississippi, I off to Europe -- I really wanted to sing "We Shall Overcome" for you at the Limelight that night, but...I guess you're old enough now to know that there were other things to do that night...other responsibilities.

'64...the beginning of the end of the "integration" thing. We at *LIBERATOR* had, naturally, long since seen the light. Check back issues. We struggled hard to come up with synonyms for the word "Negro," like "Afro-American," "Black," "Black person," "person of African descent," the Black Muslims' "so-called Negro." A "spade" or two snuck (sneaked?) by occasionally, but, admittedly, we were kind of sensitive about "nigger" (my, how times have changed). We (Dan Watts) had long predicted Martin Luther King's assassination, yes, and argued with SNCC about the

still waiting every evening for their niggers in front of the St. Marks? I guess most of us were pretty angry (no, *not* revolutionary) back then. Progeny of Garvey, DuBois, J.A. Rogers, and Paul Robeson, we had read Richard Wright, Robert F. Williams, and James Baldwin, Chuck Stone, the *Urbanite*, and Mailer's "White Negro," attended City College and the New School, dug the early Black Muslims, joined groups like the Harlem YMCA and the Manhattan Arts Theatre and the American Community Theatre, learned our "trade" from Vinnette Carroll, Frank Silvera, Maxie Glanville, and Ed Cambridge, yes, and enjoyed Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin*, supported Ossie Davis' *Purlie*, worked in *The Blacks*, and, finally, swung with LeRoi as he told all the ofays in the world, "Kiss my Black ass."

But there still wasn't much work to be had in those

days. Same old auditions. Rumors of revivals, picketing the TV networks, *Blues for Mr. Charlie* ("don't tell nobody, man, but I got the role of the preacher sewed up"), *Golden Boy* (two years' sure employment), and that was it. Bills piling up. Anger. Frustration. Why not split? Ted Joans had left. Al Hendricks getting ready to split. Archie Savage had left, William Demby long since settled in Rome, and the "dean" of the Black Expatriates, Mr. Gordon Heath, holding forth in Paris (yes, all comprising a great loss to the "brother" scene. America, my country, you will pay for this loss, this castration, this genocide!). So, UP YOUR ASS, America, I'm off to greener, unknown fields.

September 1964, Berlin

First impression of Europe: cold, gray. Nauseous BEA

taxi driver, waiter, hotel clerk, etc., "Where were you 25 years ago?" One evening our drummer, Charley Campbell, and I were invited out for a drink by one of the German backstage technicians ("Black soldiers treated us so well when they came just after the war"). As we enter one bar Charley says, "Nay, man, we can't go in here; we'll start a race riot. This is a "white" GI bar." Learned my first rule as an expatriate: stay away from the GIs.

A trip to East Berlin and the Berliner Ensemble. Like a subway ride between West 4th St. and 14th St. on the IND. Too much. It's Gestapo time out of a W.W. II film, shiny boots, neat, narrow-brimmed military caps, the hip side arms, yet "human" enough to still dig our spade chicks (Cicily, Maya, Cynthia, Helen, and Louise). Trip too short. No impressions.

On to Venice. White man's town. Spades don't know

Spade Drop-Out

BY CLEBERT FORD

former associate editor of *LIBERATOR*

flight into the city. Learned subsequently West Berlin literally an island in East Germany. Rooms practically unavailable, end up at Berlin Hilton. Wow! American officers (white), American businessmen (white), great service, money, the whole American bit. Berlin, a city awaiting Armageddon. Hustle, bustle, New York thing, only 24 wild hours a day. Building up, tearing down, all-night night clubs, and beer and brandy, GI's, strip tease and jazz (saw and heard expatriates Johnny Griffin, Art Taylor, Leo Wright), long shiny Mercedeses and rich-looking clothes. *The Blacks* an absolute success. Roscoe Lee Browne introducing us individually as only Roscoe can. Met several well-known German film actors who will pick us up after the evening performance (orgy time? Black/white perversity? Shades of *Cabaret*!!). No haps. Always on the verge of asking every

(or ain't supposed to know) nothing about the Grand Canal, and the Lido, vaporettes, gondolas, "O, Solo Mio," Murano glass, and St. Marks Square, and all that shit. City far too rich, only for romance. No place for angry Blacks. Nay, this town for Cole Porter, and Peggy Guggenheim. We're picketed by the Italian Fascist party (quite legal here, I learn, as well as Communists, Monarchists, Socialists, etc., etc.). Genet, they claim, a perverted Communist-Anarchist who does not realize that the Blacks portrayed in his play are nothing more than uncivilized cannibals. We play our two performances and the company heads back to America. "You're on your own, baby."

September 1964, Munich

Arrive just at beginning of "October Fest." "King Martin Luther," a drunk shouts at us (Charley Campbell
cont next pg

SPADE DROP-OUT cont.

my Munich host) in the Bahnhof (central station). We stay a week. I'm anxious, impatient. Want things to happen. Luckily I've brought my guitar along. I'm loud, I got rhythm, I'm Black, and I got a little personality. Cop a cognac or a beer here and there. No bread yet, but I begin to see the possibilities. Yes, the Europeans dig us Black people. And for all the "wrong" reasons -- e.g., we got rhythm, we can sing and dance, we have an open sense of humor, we're deeply religious we got "soul," etc. People still stare in the streets, but Schwaben is bohemian enough (ex-spade GIs, early hippies, etc.). I hear anti-Semitic sentiments from the older generation (no, the Germans ain't got over that problem yet). Suddenly, an invite down to Rome to participate in Jay "Flash" Riley's production of *Trumpets of the Lord* (in English). And it pays!

October 1964, Rome

Warm, friendly, cordial. Unbelievable. Man, these people can't be for real! Where are those spade-hating "wops" and bad-fighting "guinea" boys from Brooklyn and the Lower East Side? I mean, you white, ain't you? Then why don't you act like it? *Trumpets* opens and we're a fantastic success. Bravos and stomping on the floors. We run for five weeks. Thanks to Lex Monson's perseverance and artistry, we've made a beachhead in this country, and we are able to fall back on this production several times during the next two-and-a-half years.

Meantime, discovering the spade community in Rome. Mostly opera students on Rockefeller and Guggenheim grants from good Southern and Northern middle-class families, dancers stranded from early Katherine Dunham tours, all, *all* completely divorced from the "movement." "Clebert, when are you going to get that hair cut?" "Clebert, you're a very angry young man, aren't you?" Discover Harold Bradley's Folk Studio. Bradley, a five-year expatriate spade married to a German chick, studied Italian and art history in Florence and Sienna. Through a deep interest in folk music opened a do-it-yourself club in Trastevere in the old part of Rome. "Freedom time," and I filled the bill. They were ready for "Woke Up This Morning with My Mind on Freedom," and "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round," "Oh Freedom," and "Terry Roberts," and "Overcome." Black, woolly-haired, angry... "Rebel with a Guitar" the left-wing press called me. I had found a home.

November 1964

Listening to the Presidential election returns at the American Embassy, praying for a Lyndon Johnson victory. Barry Goldwater must not win, cannot win. Tension. Excitement. The Italians certain that John F. Kennedy assassinated by "right-wing forces" darkly allied with Goldwater. Relief. Johnson wins. Oh happy day!

Winter 1965

Read of Malcolm's assassination. *Rome Daily American* rejoices, calling him a spiteful, hateful, fanatic who, having lived by "violence," deserved to die the same way. Troubled by the fact that Black cats evidently pulled the triggers, yet I realize that a "contract" can be carried out on anyone in America if the payoff is right. A junkie who needs a fix, a straight-out professional killer, the CIA, a cat who needs the next payment on his El Dorado, anybody. Remember meeting Malcolm several times in front of Muslim restaurant on Seventh Avenue in the late 50s City College days. Fascinated by the Muslim philosophy and followed them through bazaars, meetings, expositions, etc. And the last time I had seen him, bearded, gentle, determined, "cool," at a private party in West Harlem discussing his recent trip to Africa. A great loss.

Spring 1965 ✓

Sitting in the warm Italian sun on the Spanish steps, trying to think of something "angry" to write for *LIBERATOR*. Cannot think of anything. Thus begins a deep alienation from the "movement." (Yes, in spite of reading about American intervention in the Congo, plots to sabotage the Brooklyn Bridge, weirdly connected with ofay French Canadian chicks, etc.) Time passes. The Italian sun literally burns out the bitterness and anger. I'm adopted by the Roman left, I eat my pasta, drink my wine, and I survive.

Summer 1965

Watts, California. *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *Herald Tribune*. Biased. "Establishment" side of things. So indoctrinated by these that I didn't realize that "up from these ashes" would rise the truly "Black" phase of the movement. Nice middle-class college students (mostly white) arrive. That European Summer again (I wonder what poor Black family's rent has paid for the trip), and I'm sickened by the Midwest and Southern accents in *American Express*. I cool the left-wing scene when they begin to criticize and condemn "my" country's growing involvement in Vietnam. Meantime, Folk Studio getting Blacker, bluesier, more soulful. Form a group, the Folkstudio Singers. Modest success with concerts, television, records. On the ofay scene I begin to dub Italian films to be sold to American television. Voice "white" enough. Jay Riley, John Kitzmiller and myself represent "brother" contingent on this scene. Terrible Steve Reeves things. Good Bread.

Hear through the grapevine rumblings on the American entertainment scene. "I Spy" a great success with Bill Cosby; Godfrey Cambridge making it as a comic actor; Ray St. Jacques with a good television contract; and he and Roscoe Lee Browne, Jimmy Jones, Cicily Tyson, and Gloria Foster signed to do *The Comedians*; Thelma Oliver in *Sweet Charity*, Clarence Williams III, a name to watch; and Bobby Dean Hooks "hot like a motherfucker" what with *Hallelujah Baby*, a role in

Preminger's *Hurry Sundown*, a starring role in a television series, and his growing involvement with the Negro Ensemble Company.

And still no desire to return stateside. So it's two-and-a-half years in Italy, learning the language half-assedly, digging the Colosseum, the Vatican, this piazza, that square, churches, museums, statuary (still find it impossible to distinguish between a Bellini and a Bernini), singing and dubbing, dubbing and singing. Oh, yes, sandwiched somewhere in this period a five-day "tourist" trip to Paris. Cold, unfriendly. Also a five-week stay in Malaga, Spain, with an aborted Italian film production.

July 1966, Stockholm

Miraculously invited to play a lead role at the State Theatre in Stockholm. Chelderolde's *Pantagleize* in Swedish. Back to theatre and "up north." Sharply contrasted with the "south," Scandinavia cold, business-like, clean, modern. They need a spade actor who can learn the role in a couple of months. Again, I fill the bill. I learn the role phonetically, and I succeed. Stockholm very much "aware" of the movement. Martin Luther King a national hero; Makeba, Belafonte, almost as well revered. Jazz and blues regularly heard at concerts, radio, TV. Practically every Swedish chick enrolled in a jazz ballet class (spade teachers Talley Beatty, Walter Nicks, Clifford Fears, Herman Howell, Dianne Gray all working in '66), and, finally, books and magazines, American "documentary" TV programs.

Theatre in Sweden, like the country as a whole, young, progressive, hip. They've already done *The Dutchman* (yes, with a white "Swede" made up as a spade), *The Connection*, Megan Terry, Genet's *The Screens*, Alvin Ailey's troupe a tremendous success, the San Francisco Dance workshop did its nude thing. A swinging, alert country.

I play a role in Wesker's *The Kitchen* in a town theatre (Norkopping). The production a tremendous success; we play the Royal Dramatic Theatre guest performance. I'm offered a one year's contract with a Swedish speaking theatre in Finland. I accept, but first a vacation down "south" in Rome. *Trumpets* the American presentation selected for Jean Louis Barault's Festival of Nations in Paris.

May 1967, Paris

A mixed American-European Black cast for *Trumpets*. Paris in a new light. The most international city in the world. Black faces, blue faces, yellow and red and white. Everybody cool. Look out New York you've got a hard competitor. Gordon Heath nobly holding forth at his "oh sooo Parisian" folk club-bar. Johnny Romero, late of Greenwich Village, hosting a very hip bar in St. Germaine Des Pres, and, finally, Black tourists. Yes, bachelor nurses, middle-class doctors, teachers, GI Master Sergeants, and students. Here, as ever, the perennial Black exiles. I meet some "home

Forty Acres and a Mule

chained to a daydream

i stopped to think beneath the bridge

my fantasy continues as the cloud breaks

"sail alone....flashing glances"

(illusions of Africa)

BLACKS,

negroes, afro-americans, niggers, coloreds, spades, etc.

redeemed by a 5¢ coupon

kissed by treasures

of plastic stamps

at the trading post

across the paisley tomahawks

on the wall

through the halls of pink

missionaries

quivering terror dressed in white

awaken

silvery gifts of pain

--- jm davis

folks" in the cast (Billy Stewart, Theresa Merritt, Mike Hinton) and learn about happenings on the home front. Soul food for the first time in three years at Leroy Haines'. The "Six Day War" turns Paris upside down. The Jewish population, native and foreign, turn out in great numbers. A time for rejoicing. I "celebrate" by having my first Kosher salami sandwich in three years in the ghetto. Ah, Paris in the spring. The smell of perfume in the air, the sensuous city. No, Europe is my thing, and I'm staying on.

August 1967, Vasa, Finland

Siberia. Absolute exile. Rationalize that I'm learning my "art," paying my dues. So it's learning the language, my roles, complete involvement in theatre. The only spade in town (My God, he speaks Swedish, too). A new experience for the town. I'm the first in history. Stares. An occasional gasp of amazement. I survive. I wonder if it is European politeness, or really my talent. No matter. I play the gamut, the Street Singer in *Three Penny Opera*, "Sax" in Carlino's *Sarah and the Sax*, a comic lover in a farce by the Italian left-wing play-

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SPADE DROP-OUT cont.

wright, Dario Fo, a "pop" revue, a Swedish pageant type play. And there is TV, radio (radio theatre a very important part of Scandinavian culture), and singing engagements (no matter how bad, I was a Black cat in the flesh singing Black music). Slowly, quite slowly, the nostalgia sets in. I'm too far from "home." Too alone up here in the far north. Vibrations. Black Power and the Blackness, things are being said and moves are being made that I want to be a part of.

Spring 1968

Martin L. King gunned down. Knew it would be coming sometime, but can't help feeling that any "brother" could have been standing on that motel balcony in Memphis. Bam! Robert Kennedy gets it, and I wonder if my country is really falling apart. I run scared. Sign a contract for the following year in Finland.

Summer 1968

We do LeRoi's *The Slave*. My "nose is wide open." Finances rule out a trip to America, so down to Rome for several weeks. A fantastic meeting with a very dear friend, Miss "T. O." on her way to do her thing in Africa. I learn of the full extent of the movement. And what's this? Spades are talking to one another on the streets. Not that shame-faced turning away of just the previous summer, but now "brothers." Spade chicks all natural, and I feel the change. Wow! What's happening back home? Participated in Jay Riley's *Jerico 68*. Strangely out of date. Integration definitely outre. Black Power the rallying cry. Feel that it is imperative now to get home the next year.

August 1968 - May 1969, Finland

An uneventful season. Am now an established, integral part of ensemble. We do six rather unimportant plays (still doing the whole bit though...a children's play, a Feydeau farce, even a "Swedish" businessman). I'm invited to return the following season, but I know I have had it. I must be back to a real, "happening" world.

Finland a strange country indeed. Bordered on the west by progressive Sweden, on the east by the Soviet Union, truly a country in the middle. Swedish-speaking population on certain parts of the coast seemingly create a real cultural problem. One is reminded of the French-English problem in Canada. In Helsinki where I am now working in a film about an African student's experience with a Finnish-Swedish girl, there are only about twelve Blacks. Treated rather well, but Fanon was right: a drunken European slaps a Black man on the back, taking liberties that he would never take with another European or when he is sober. When you as a Black react negatively to his behavior, he calls you the same "nigger" that the white honky calls you.

Europeans on the whole more humane, though, polite, considerate, less pushy, and more truly "sophisticated"

than Americans. No doubt World War II tamed the more violent elements in the various European countries. In the nearly five years that I have lived in Europe I think I have read or heard of no more than ten violent crimes. As regards to race, I would venture to say that should a large group of Blacks suddenly "invade" any European country it would not take long for that country to develop racist attitudes. Yet, as a Black American, who like every American is affected with this disease of racial thinking, I must say that this is only supposition on my part.

What have these five years meant to me personally? Practically, it has meant working continuously in the theatre and related arts. From this has come, hopefully, artistic growth, a more mature approach to "my art," and, finally, a fuller understanding of the world in which I function. Yes, a world "Western" in outlook and philosophy -- but is this not the world in which we now live? Must contend with? Ultimately transform? Admittedly all of these experiences may seem quite irrelevant in terms of the Black American scene as a whole since these experiences have been rather exceptional, yet it does seem that a great deal of what I have been able to accomplish has been due to my very Blackness, in a sense a "commodity" that has been able to be "marketed," in direct contrast to the "color-as-a-handicap" philosophy of a racist America. Black peoples all over the world have, themselves, forced a change in this thinking, and it is heartening to observe that Black Americans in particular have come around to accepting themselves in terms of their unique Blackness.

NOTES

And now "home" after nearly 5 years. Running a little nervous, anxious, scared. Probably will seem like a new country. Yuppies, Hippies, grass and LSD. "Pig" policemen (what do you call a spade cop?), and anti-war demonstrations. "New Thing" jazz and white blues singers (1 Aretha Franklin equals 7,000 Janis Joplin plus 4,500 Julie Driscolls plus 3,000 Canned Heats plus.....).

A new President (in a word, a loser), and the same old "Toms" (Roy Wilkins, best described by Brother Julius Lester as "a white man who somehow came out the wrong color." Cold, baby, cold. And Bayard Rustin. Ugh! These cats definitely need to be put out to pasture). The cry of "law and order" has replaced "white backlash" (whitey still using the same old scare tactics), and college kids running wild (do your thing! "Our" sons lookin' good like bad motherfuckers should up at Cornell). Yet, I wonder. Are the concentration camps really being readied? Cleaver had to split to Cuba. Rap Brown and Bobby Seale under indictment. What choices must be made? Is it really later for the system or do we play games with it? Revolution or "respectable anger"? "Black is Beautiful" or "later for whitey"? My cop-out was five years' exile in Europe. Maybe it was easier. We'll see.

Taking Whitey's Word: Replies

Three responses to the article "Taking Whitey's Word" by Selwyn R. Cudjoe which appeared in the May 1969 issue of *LIBERATOR*.



Tom Mboya, center of recent controversy in Harlem.

I Really Said...

Dear Mr. Watts:

Mr. Selwyn R. Cudjoe has attributed to me a role in the recent incident involving Tom Mboya in Harlem which I did not play. In the first place, Mr. Cudjoe has misstated what I said in my lecture. I said that South Africa has been on the political and economic offensive on the African continent for several years now and already maintains cordial relations with five independent African states (Botswana, Lesotho, Malagasy Republic, Malawi, and Swaziland). I said that three African states stood as a firm bulwark against South Africa's offensive. They are Tanzania, Zambia and Congo/K, and the three form a belt across the African continent. I further suggested that South Africa would not be unhappy to see a right-wing coup in any of these states as it would then permit her to break through to the north. Finally, I predicted that if she were able to "break through," Kenya would be one of her main targets because of Kenya's key economic position in East Africa. It is not politically impossible that the leadership of Kenya, as it would be at that future point in time, might

agree to have the same kind of trade relations with South Africa that five other Black states presently have.

As you can see, this is a long way from saying that Kenya is "on the verge of trading with South Africa." No wonder Mr. Ruoro denied what I was presumed to have said.

As for Mr. Mboya, I have known him for fourteen years and do not condone, much less approve, his being splattered with eggs, especially as I agree with what he is reported to have said at the meeting. I respect him as a Kenyan and African nationalist.

Finally, may I say that the greatest con game of all is that which one plays on oneself -- i.e., underestimating the power of one's enemies and misidentifying them. I am all for dialogue among Blacks and would personally do nothing to hinder it. I am also for dialogue among the left. While the two dialogues are not identical and are occasionally, even often, at crosspurposes, they are not impossible to reconcile one with the other.

Immanuel Wallerstein
Associate Professor of Sociology
Columbia University

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Mr. Mboya in Harlem

by Songha Wanyandey Songha

Mr. Cudjoe's article has thrown helpful light on the disgraceful and disrespectful behavior exhibited toward Mr. Tom Mboya in Harlem on March 18, 1969. Dissent became an extreme act of banditry and a disgrace to our race when, instead of an open and frank discussion with a foreign brother, some of us indulged in irrelevant and malicious anger simply to prove that we were revolutionaries. It was symptomatic of the kind of "armchair" revolution in which Blacks are quicker to abuse their own Black brothers and sisters, killing those whitey has earmarked and thereby forgetting what the actual target is. The treatment to which Mr. Mboya was subjected has never been experienced by Lindsay or Wagner, or indeed, Humphrey, on the many occasions they visited Harlem. Perhaps Harlemites simply wanted to prove that brothers from the other side of the Atlantic must accept worse treatment than an American whitey.

I am a Kenyan student who happens to have been a Harlem resident for some three good years now, and

who also has participated actively both in words and deeds in the movement, a fact which gives me a better understanding of the prevalent Black ethos than perhaps Mr. Mboya. In the light of the remarks Mr. Mboya had made in an interview with an *Ebony* reporter, I anticipated some heated discourse, even boos, but I did not expect egg-throwing, and I would certainly not subscribe to the notion that simply because Kenyans may disagree with Senegalese concerning foreign bases on African soil, a Senegalese minister should be treated to utterly nauseating insults.

I was seated in the second row from the stage and saw it all. I do not think it is possible for me to forget the face of the brother who released the missiles of eggs; I can only wonder at his incredible ignorance of where the real battlefield is. Whitey certainly must have been pleased that it happened in Harlem: to the ordinary African at home no further evidence is now necessary to show that we do not communicate, and the incident only served to amplify the negative image of a

"violent" Harlem (indeed, some East African newspapers have responded by suggesting that the American brothers be screened before allowing them visas to Africa). In any case, the four of us who had no other choice but to rescue Mr. Mboya from an angry and rude audience surely did not enjoy the occasion. It was a very frightening experience. One very respectful Black lady, quite active in Harlem politics and whom I have known in many conferences, turned into an irrational and uncontrollable being for five minutes, absolutely refusing to give Mr. Mboya an opportunity to clarify his stand. Her group, which occupied the first three rows, rushed onto the stage and released a barrage of nauseating insults.

I happen to disagree with Mr. Mboya's stand vis-a-vis a Back-to-Africa movement. My supporting such a movement, however, does not overlook the fact that Afro-Americans are Americans until they become Africans. Perhaps it should be made clear that since some parts of Africa became independent no more than 2000-3000 Afro-Americans have be-

It Ain't Necessarily So

by Michael Knashie Searles

It seems rather surprising to me that Brothers Cudjoe and Tom Mboya should have made so many fundamental errors in explaining the liberation struggle of African people.

My first area of disagreement: In an apparent effort to clarify some previous remarks, Mboya is quoted as saying, "I was once asked whether I supported the movements of Afro-Americans from the United States to Africa. My answer was No. I do not believe that we should run away from the struggle." While there are practical reasons why large-scale migrations to Africa would not serve African liberation, the idea that if Africans living in America migrate to Africa it would mean "running away from the struggle" is preposterous. If we accept Brother Malcolm X's appraisal that Black liberation is international, then there is just as much of a struggle in Africa as anywhere else.

Brother Cudjoe has also made several gross assumptions. The first is that by fact of birth, though he does not say so directly, Black men born in the United States and West Indies are Americans. National identity or racial identity is both a question of what the person himself accepts as well as what those in power accept. We Africans born in America have been trying to make white Americans accept us as Americans. We have failed and will continue to fail because one can not be an American unless he is white. That's what the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments as well as the host of civil rights bills should have taught us by now.

Brother Cudjoe again seems to imply that Africans and Afro-Americans have little in common except "pigmentation of skin and the same origin." Even a cursory review of the culture of Africans on the con-

tinents and the outlying areas of the Americas will show a continuity that reflects itself in music, language, and customs. A number of musicologists, linguists, and anthropologists --and more recently, a beautiful sister named Maya Angelo narrating a series of ten programs on educational TV --have expounded exhaustively on these points.

The idea that being an African means "having a native African tongue, a tribe and certain traditions associated with it" had a lot more truth in the past than it does today. Paralleling the efforts of African states to make national identity the primary unit of allegiance, many native African brothers are now born in urban areas where they are not taught a native African language as their first tongue. Many of those brothers who had a loose tribal grouping, even in traditional times, have little or no ties today. In some cases

come citizens; the reasons tend to confirm more love for America than Africa. In fact, when a Nigeran physician recently came specifically to recruit Blacks to help him in Nigeria, he had to return empty-handed. To go back to Africa now does not necessarily need an organization, especially when each state can effect her own immigration policies: the door seems wider now than during the Garvey days. All that is required is the will and spirit to accept rather than to romanticize Africa.

The open challenge to the present generation of Blacks in the New World can be looked at from three angles: they can make it wherever they are, go back to Africa, or, indeed, just think of Africa as their "home away from home." Any of the three is perfectly legitimate so long as one honors and adheres to universal Black brotherhood. Let, however, there be no doubt that Africa can accommodate all her sons now scattered around the globe.

In the many dialogs I have shared with the brothers here, the question has always been raised as to where

Africa's responsibility would lie in the event of a Black revolution in this country. It is, of course, perfectly within the domain of reasonable logic to anticipate genocide and Blacks lingering in concentration camps. This unfortunate possibility has been removed from the African mind by the overpowerful propaganda of the U.S. missions in Africa. Nevertheless, Africa cannot transfer her responsibility towards Afro-Americans. I personally submit that through the auspices of the OAU joint discussions should be started which would aim at finding out how Afro-Americans can be absorbed into our population without causing undue concentration in particular regions or countries. This is not necessarily an African problem; it is a Black problem requiring a Black solution. No brothers here have ventured to follow Bro' Malcolm's footsteps of addressing the O.A.U., but they should be doing some talking in Africa instead of leaving it all to the U.S.I.A/S and the Voice of America. The Wallersteins and the *New York Times* can only help by instigating egg-throwing and discord.

tribes have actually disappeared through absorption. What would a brother who no longer had a tribe be—a European? (Brother Cudjoe suggests that these things might fade away in the future but for now we must remain American.) Likewise, tribal traditions have been broken, modified, distorted and lost. Some of this began to happen soon after the missionaries arrived. I am not trying to suggest that no native African brothers have a native African language, tribal affiliations or customs associated with that tribe, but if these criteria are held fast many native African brothers would be excluded from the status of African.

In closing, I wish to address the assumption made by Brother Cudjoe that brothers in New York responded hostilely to Brother Mboya because Immanuel Wallerstein, a white professor, had mentioned that "Kenya was on the verge of trading with South Africa." While I heartily agree

that Black people should carefully examine whatever white folks say, we should not assume that the actions of Black people are always based on what the last white person said.

It so happens that during Brother Mboya's recent stay in the U.S. he was supposed to speak at Howard University. He was prevented from speaking at Howard University by Kenyan and other native African students who told the Howard administration that if they wanted an Uncle Tom to speak they didn't have to go to Kenya to find one. These brothers were very concerned that Brother Mboya, who probably is one of the strongest supporters of American interests in Africa, would project a greatly distorted and potentially harmful picture of Africa. Whether one agrees with these tactics or not, it is important to note that these brothers were neither politically naive nor unaware of the situation in Africa.

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Coney Island

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ILLUSTRATOR July 1969



Cultural

For the western world holds me in fee
And I can never hope for full release
While to its alien Gods, I bend my knee.
Claude McKay

We are familiar with the quest for Black Power in the political, social, and educational spheres of American life; however, few of us are familiar with the long struggle for Black Power or Black Nationalism in Afro-American letters. Yet, in one important genre, the novel, cultural nationalism has been explored since Martin Delaney's fragment, *Blake, or the Huts of Africa*, written in 1859. This quest—beginning early in Black literature when the majority of Black folk were still dispersed in the rural areas of America—reached its apex at the time of the Harlem Renaissance when the greatest in-migration in American history transformed a rural folk into an urban folk.

The ramifications of this statement cannot be properly appraised without an understanding of that cultural dichotomy which has existed for so long in the Black community. And a brief history of the Afro-American novel prior to the Harlem Renaissance is necessary to bring the novel of the city into sharper focus.



RICHARD WRIGHT

The first novel published by a Black man was *Clotel, or the Colored Heroine*, written by William Wells Brown in 1853. Yet *Clotel* might well have been written by any member of the Plantation School of writers, for Brown, in *Clotel*, does not minimize the debt he owes to this school.

His characters are equally romantic, his situations equally improbable, and his attribution of angelic qualities to those Afro-Americans who are white in every essential except color is in the best tradition of the Aryan supremacy mythologists. For Brown, as for his white contemporaries, the standards of beauty and excellence were white in every aspect.

The case is quite different with Martin Delaney. Delaney seeks to turn the Black novel inward, to deal with the Black experience as a distinct one, bordering only tangentially upon the American experience. And what Frederick Douglass said about Delaney sums up, I believe, Delaney's attitude toward his people and his characters: "I wake up every morning and thank God for making me a man," wrote Douglass; "Delaney thanks God for making him a Black man."

What is important here is that these two brother abolitionists saw the function of Black literature in different ways. The novel for Brown was to be at one and the same time a vehicle for protest as well as a vehicle for cataloging the achievements of the race. Those characters who survived the American ordeal were rewarded with the artifacts of

Nationalism:

The Black Novel and the City

Addison Gayle, Jr

Western culture. The major thesis of the novel was the Horatio Alger motif done over in colors of medium grey.

Delaney, too, saw the novel as a vehicle of protest; but even more, he saw the novel as a vehicle for affirming the Black identity outside of the American context. For Delaney, Black men were transplanted Africans, brought by misfortune to a strange land to sing their songs before alien gods. These Blacks, therefore, would have to make the group journey to identity outside of the context of the American melting pot theory.

However, the history of the Black novel before the Harlem Renaissance is almost a complete negation of Delaney's thesis, and it is the novel as seen by Brown which would exist with slight variation for over fifty years. J. McHenry Jones (*Iola Leroy*), Pauline Hopkins (*In Contending Forces*), and Paul Laurence Dunbar (*The Fanatics*) pay homage to the assimilationist motif. The experiences of their characters are shown to vary little from the experiences of white Americans. They argue, sometimes nauseatingly so, that the only differences between Black Americans and white Americans is the accident

of color; and they come very close to arguing, as Phillis Wheatley did in poetry, that Blacks are little more than reformed savages brought to the altar of Christianity by the grace of Western civilization.

It is not surprising that such novels use as their setting a rural environment. The rural South is the basis of reference, and the romantic machinery of Southern life has become a necessity for these writers. Mired in the South, steeped in the rural plantation tradition, these early novels were vehicles for the Black middle class in the same manner that the novels of Thomas Dixon and Thomas Nelson Page were vehicles for the Southern white aristocracy.

The break with the rural tradition would come only when the Black novel, following the exodus of Black people, came to the city. And in the nineteenth century, Blacks began to pour into the city. They went as far west as California, as far north as Canada; and they settled in the Watts', the Bedford-Stuyvesants, the Houghs, and the Harlems of America. They came, as Du Bois was to note, in search of Canaan, and they were to be sorely disappointed.

Yet into urban America they



RALPH ELLISON

brought their history, their folklore, their customs, and their anger. They demanded a religion which would suit their needs, and their ministers came north to minister to them in a new and different setting. They demanded a social structure based not upon caste and color but upon the brother-

cont next pg

hood of one Black man with another. The similarities between the injustices North and South enabled them to pierce the veil of American mythology; and as a result, they demanded a literature-- not of manners and gentility-- but one which would reflect their hopes, their fears, and their anxieties. A literature which would be as forthright as the Garvey movement in presenting their demands and in helping to construct their sense of identity.

Professor Alain Locke of Howard University best sums up this new mood and its literary implications: "Of all the voluminous literature on the Negro," wrote Professor Locke, in the introduction to the anthology *The New Negro* (1925), "so much is mere external view and commentary that we may warrantably say that nine-tenths of it is about the Negro rather than of him.... We turn, therefore... to the elements of truest social portraiture, and discover in the artistic self-expression of the Negro today a new figure on the national canvas...."

This New Negro was no longer the stereotype of the Booker T. Washington era; instead, he was "the New Negro" of the cities who, having deserted the farm, was very rapidly becoming urbanized. And his earliest and most persistent supporter was the poet Langston Hughes.

"To my mind," writes Hughes in "The Negro Writer and the Racial Mountain," "it is the duty of the younger Negro artist to change through the force of his art that old whispering 'I want to be white' hidden in the aspirations of his people to 'Why should I want to be white? I am a Negro--and beautiful.'"

The spirit of Martin Delaney had been revived in the Harlem Renaissance; for Black was not only beautiful, but also different and distinct. And with the acceptance of this fact, the Black novelist was forced to move away from romanticism and

mythology and deal realistically with a people living, dying, hoping, and hating in the ghettos of America. A cultural renaissance was in its earliest stages and a new cultural awareness was evident in Afro-American life. The pioneers of the Harlem Renaissance did much to bring about this awareness, and in so doing, called for a commitment to reality which would be echoed by the young Black writers in the era of the '60s.

The first Black writer to affirm this commitment to reality was a young man who, ten years after the Harlem Renaissance, would write in the article "A Blueprint for Negro Writing": "The Negro writer who seeks to function within his race as a purposeful agent has a serious responsibility. In order to do justice to his subject matter, in order to depict Negro life in all its manifold and intricate relationships, a deep informed and complexed consciousness is necessary; a consciousness which draws its strength upon the fluid lore of a great people, and molds this lore with the concepts that move and direct the forces of history today. The Negro writer is called upon to do no less than create values by which his race is to struggle, live, and die...." The young man was Richard Wright, and four years later he would write *Native Son*, create Bigger Thomas, and move the Black novel to a height of realism which, sadly, has not been surpassed to this day.

Let us not be swayed by the academic critics who, imbued with the notion that "literature should not mean, but be," have dealt with *Native Son* in terminology more appropriate for dealing with the plastic and not the literary arts. Let us not be swayed by the moralists among us who attempt to find in Bigger Thomas the epitome of man's degradation and inhumanity. Let us rather put *Native Son* into proper historical

perspective, and in so doing, deal with the period of the 1940s when *Native Son* was published.

In Europe, the German pogroms were well under way. In but a short time, almost the whole of Europe would come under the sway of a tyranny almost as vicious as that under which Blacks have lived for two hundred years. In America, the detention camps which would later house Japanese Americans were under construction. And it would not be long before American citizens of German descent would be subjected to persecution and abuse. The paranoid attacks on the Jewish population of Germany would be reiterated in the propaganda attacks on the Jewish population in America. For Black Americans, the journey from South to North would prove to be no more than a journey from one kind of oppression to another. For any sensitive individual living in this tumultuous period, the symbol of man's reality was not, as Ralph Ellison would have us believe, the tragic clown, but instead, the concentration camp. Therefore, it is in this concentration camp environment that Bigger Thomas was born.

The validity of Bigger Thomas and the test of his humanity must then be examined in light of the concentration camp metaphor. And in so doing, we are forced to conclude that the murder of Mary Dalton, at one point so shocking and so senseless, is, when viewed from a different perspective, so cathartic and so necessary. For in that world in which the concentration camp is man's touchstone for reality, the values by which men live and die are existential ones; and one must create his identity, a sense of his own self-worth, out of the chaos and confusion inherent in living as a victim in a dehumanized world.

We have then, indeed, come a long way from Martin Delaney. Delaney would have settled for Black emigra-

tion back to Africa, to a place where men, free from arbitrary restrictions, might create their own identities. Richard Wright, on the other hand, would settle for nothing less than a piece of this earth, here, whereupon men would carve their identity out of violence and despair, thereby transcending the limitations imposed upon them. *Native Son* thus succeeds in destroying the American myth, in rending to shreds the make-believe world of the romantics, in leaving the American dream in shambles, and, finally, in perceiving a reality which the serious Black writers who followed would have to confront.

The two most popular Black writers of our day, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, each in his own way, have had great difficulty in confronting the reality of *Native Son*. Neither has been capable of accepting the stark reality of the world which the novel presents, nor has either been capable of accepting the nationalistic implications. Therefore, neither Baldwin nor Ellison has moved the novel beyond Wright's conception.

James Baldwin continues to waver between assimilationism and nationalism, unable, until "Blues for Mr. Charlie," to examine the American society in other than personal terms. No writer knows the city better than James Baldwin, yet no writer has failed more miserably in depicting in fiction the reality of urbanized Black America.

But if Baldwin is not capable of moving the Black novel forward, he is not guilty of moving it backward. That censure is more fittingly applied to Ralph Ellison.

The world that Ellison presents for the serious Black critic is no less romantic than the world of Harriet Beecher Stowe, and his characters are no more real than those Dilseys of William Faulkner, whose patience and humility enable them to endure. *Invisible Man*, we are told by critics--usually white--is a novel whose protagonist could be everyman; which means, according to Black novelist John Killens, that he is in reality no man.

This is the fallacy of the American society, and the fallacy of *Invisible Man*: that the Black American can find his identity only in a metamorphosed America in which the melting pot, having bubbled over, has fused the disparate cultures within it and produced a product labeled everyman. If one argues that the concentration camp metaphor is no longer applicable in the America of today, one must argue concomitantly that the symbol of the Black Rhinehart, that man who creates and re-creates his identity with each new experience, is invalid in Black America where the individual identity cannot exist apart from the group identity.

It is not too far wrong, then, to suggest that Afro-American literature awaits its Whitman and that the chances of this Whitman appearing are better today than at any time before. Young Black writers for whom the city is home are attempting to create a literature which moves beyond Richard Wright. They accept the basic premise of Black Nationalism--that Black people are different from other Americans--and they echo Edward Channing in arguing that such differences mandate a different literature. They are reexamining their culture, and finding it rich and diverse. They do not deny the relevance of American history to their lives, but they would not exchange their history by merging them into one. Unlike the Ralph Ellisons of the world, these young writers would never trade a Frederick Douglass for a Thomas Jefferson, for they know that one was a slaveholder and the other a crusader against slavery, and that in such an exchange they would get the short end of the bargain.

They are such men as Ed Bullins in drama, LeRoi Jones in poetry, and John Williams in fiction; and though they are young and I have spoken of them as new, their spirit is not new at all. It is the spirit exemplified by Noah Webster, Martin Delaney, Walt Whitman, and Richard Wright. And, like James Joyce, they too believe that the writer can have no greater task than "to forge from the smithy of his soul, the uncreated conscious of the race."

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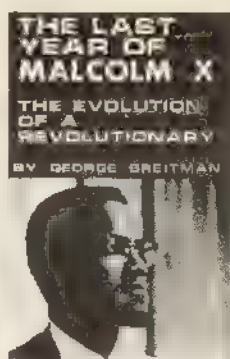
Oh, Black girl,
 Oh, don't cha know
 that the fires tip behind you
 whenever you go
 tipping 'long the streets 'o
 Harlem late 'o night.
 Willow of the wisp, chocolate
 brown girl from Georgia
 no doubt
 I read "Freedom" on your buttocks
 and "Black Power" on your thighs
 as you tip on with me bopping
 just one step behind.
 Now, aren't we *bad*?
 You with your hair so naturally fine,
 and mine sportin' no lye
 (ain't it what Malcolm downed us about?)
 and I wonder about my wrap --
 pardon me, my approach to
 request the cuddiness
 of your sweetness.
 Do I play middle-class whitey
 and ask you for the time,
 or do I come on block-boy style
 and tell you how
 fine a fox you *really* are?
 I opt for Negritude with
 a touch of Harvard,
 but before the third beat of my
 combo falls upon your
 earringed ears
 you slay me with an
 "Outta my face, nigger."
 'Tis late!"
 Oh, subterfuge...Cool mightly blown!
 the little Black bitch loading "Nigger"
 in my PhD face.
 But she loses the good thing.
 'cause I got the token,
 I got the time,
 they got the tolerance,
 and my flip side is Number One
 along the Great White Way.

-- R. Ernest Holmes

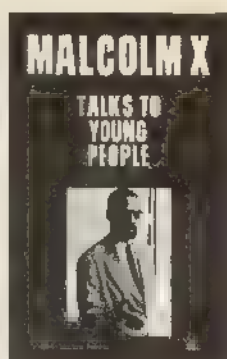
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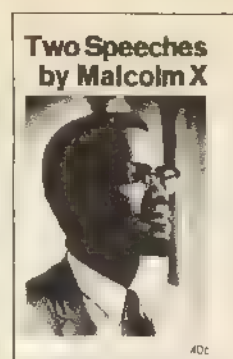
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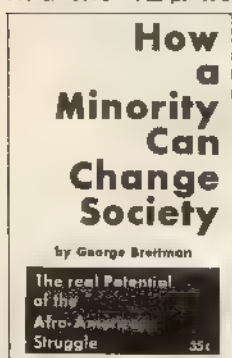
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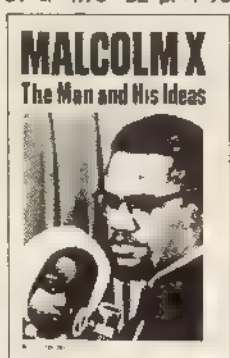
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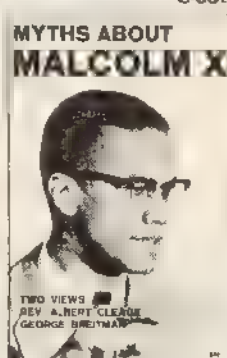
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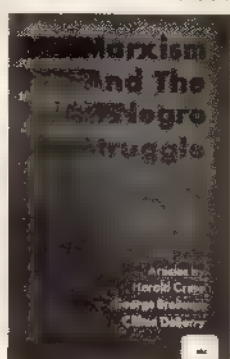
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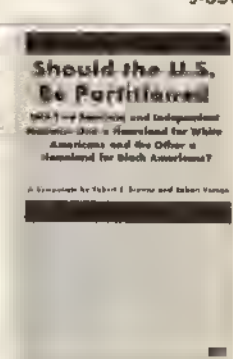
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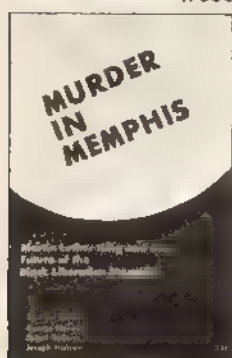
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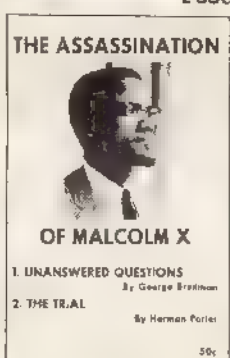
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The Lost Man

by Russ Meek

Well, here we go again.

First, we had *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. As a nig-ge-roe doctor, Poitier courted and was to marry a white woman, all on a platonic level. And then we had *For Love of Ivy*, in which he changed his social status to a hustling truckdriver so he could court the "cullud maid."

Now, lo and behold, he becomes a 20th Century Black Robbin' Hood. *The Lost Man* opens with some very unusual scenes -- like slums, police cars with sirens going, picket line with the white lawyer standing by... and Brother Sidney is seen looking very revolutionary in a car with some tough-looking folks in dashikis (I think one had on a new denim suit, otherwise known as overalls). And of course Big Sidney had on shades. When he got out of the car, you *know* he walked very revolutionary.

Meanwhile, back at the demonstration (non-violent demonstration, that is), the pooooo-lice was beating nigger heads (male and female) to the tune of "Ain't nobody gonna turn us around 'cause we love billy clubs or somethin'." *Beep, beep, beep...* we switch to a secret meeting of B.S. (Big Sid) and his revolutionaries... map on wall, 38 Specials in attache case, and what appears to be a battle plan being outlined (turns out to be *Heap Big Robbery!*). A white gal (has to be one in every one of his movies, you know) meets him as he leaves the meeting and goes to his house, etc., etc., etc., where B.S. and his leader of non-violent revolutionaries argue about the results of the battle plan which would, in the words of the "leader," be "destructive 'to slum property...also, somebody might get killed." (It's at this point that B.S. makes the only pertinent remark of the movie: "Big loss.")

When white gal gets inquisitive, B.S. says, "Forget my name gal, just forget my name." But I *guess* she didn't 'cause the next scene we see him down on the docks dancing

and drinking Budweiser at midnight with... guess who? You're right: "the white gal." So guess what! When he asks her why she hangs around him and his folks, she gives a typical white liberal answer: "I need to be needed." Then she and her "tall, dark secret" part melodramatically. (*I bet you she'll be back.*)

So the battle plan unfolds as a... guess what? Yeah, a *HOLD-UP*. And they are going to rob this white place where lots of bread is and, of course, after great and meticulous preparation (including dancing on the docks with the white gal the night before, you understand), the thing goes wrong 'cause B.S. ain't about to kill the white man boss of the place. And B.S. *can't* kill him because when they attempt to take him hostage he looks B.S. right in the eye and says, "I'll be damned if I'll go," and B.S. looks him in the eye and says, "I'll kill you," and the white man looks him in the eye and says, "It ain't in the script," and B.S. says, "Aw, shucks," and kills the guard instead.

So, B.S. gets shot and one of his revolutionaries gets killed and B.S.'s in big trouble. Pooooo-lice is everywhere. Ain't no *big loss* yet, but they are closing in on Jesse James-- I mean, Big Sid. Now, one of the robbers is named Orville (he looks just like Big Tank in *Uptight*). Orv, he's slick. He done took a whole package of money and stuck it in his coat while they were doing the robbing. So he and Eddie, after much cop-lodging, decide to go to this speakasy (after-hours joint) run by his friend named Tee, a known stool pigeon and friend of the "cop with a cold." So here we go. Miniskirts and booze mixed with some hip-shaking and whores in bed...and Miss Tee calls her friend "the cop with a cold." *NET RESULT:* she gets "face full of money"? (Well, Orville threw it at her as he died full of the cop's bullets.)

But Miss Tee wants more than

that, so she asks, "Boss Man, is dere any reward?" He says, "Yeah... ..in heaven!!!" B.S., meanwhile, has hidden out in a movie, and a nice-looking, simple-minded cullud gal takes him home, bathes him and fixes his wound even though he's a total stranger. He leaves her to go with the white gal (you remember her: "I need to be needed"), and, *beep, beep, beep...* he confesses he killed the guard, she splits from her dad, he misses getaway freight train 'cause the fuzz is waiting. (Oh yes, I forgot. Her daddy slaps her when she goes away with Sid. Then he calls the coppers and tells them, "That nigger kidnapped my daughter!") However, B.S. still gets away.

Now, we are at the waterfront. B.S. and pale-faced gal definitely in love. *OOOH WOW!!!!* *THEY NEEDS EACH OTHER!* Why, they even kiss in the boat and *then* they go to bed. Fact is, he loves her so much he even lies on the arm he's shot in and it doesn't hurt. Now in *this* movie, he *really* kisses her and *then some*. And guess who's really coming to dinner: L.L. "cop with a cold" Hamilton. Meanwhile, Sid has *over-loved* and is late for appointment with getaway boat. So, he gets shot again.

Now, he's really in trouble. But his white gal (you remember her) decides to die with him. So down on the docks as the cops close in, Sid (shot full of holes) Poitier, otherwise known as Jason Higgs, asks the white gal, otherwise known as Cathy Ellis, "How far away is the boat?" And she says knowingly and dramatically, "It's a long way, but I'm going with you." She snatches his gun from his belt and we say, "Hot zig-gy, she gonna sock it to them pigs." But... *god damn!* She shoots down at the ground and the pigs mow 'em down and there they lie *BLACK AND WHITE TOGETHER*.

All I have to say to Mr. Sidney (\$9,000,000 earned in 1969) Poitier is...*BULLSHIT*. And go get *Lost Man!*



Berk A. Costello

(left to right): Felipe Luciano, Gylan Kain, and David Nelson, the Black poets in CONCEPT-EAST POETRY.

Concept-East Poetry is a blend, the deepest mixture of all recollection...made of gospel music, street fighting, and the recognition that hats, a moustache -- rhythms filling any void -- still bring us right next to what style implies...even if it's always looking better on somebody else...haircuts long time ago by barbers who remembered their sorrows and hatred when they dropped clippers on our heads, visits from the iceman, the oilman, the coalman...all this history, celebrations of forgotten other times, Concept-East bringing it back, breaking it down.

Words/music lending assistance in the battle against evil days (we need so much) and these words, this rhythm becoming explorer of shadows captured, held but not washed with any light that teachers of English know -- being loved for being shadows, being Black.

Free enough to indulge in worship of the darkness. Three of them some of you remember calling out as The Last Poets: Brother David saying it, Brother Kain shaping it, Brother Felipe bringing song a dual reference; standing before us in the truest spirit of every moment of our days and times.

Where? The ritual will perhaps find you before you discover the ritual (or yourself)...seen tonight at the Paperback Theater, 80 Second Avenue, NYC...but ready from its in-

dedicated thrust to snatch consciousness in bars, beauty parlors, barber (cue) shops, etcetera, etcetera, and holy after-hour sanctified places -- in the street (where the only honest ethic in America begins and ends) or in concert on the walls of your mind, music dancing all over, making new corridors, shocks, tremors, a sigh that maybe we haven't heard just that way before, or haven't heard in a long time but recognize right away anyway.

Who? Kain, pressing himself against himself, says: "They call me Little Willie Armstrong Jones... reach out for me." And all shufflers on all real avenues -- Lenox, Indiana, Humboldt and the one you live on -- cry out to be remembered, acknowledged in their easy sadness and storied hipness. Reminding us that we leave many lyrics, many songs behind in doorways, in overcoats too old to fight the winter, in cheap shoes and wine...way back there with all the Willies, Big Cleves, Diablos, all the cats named Sonny, Junebug, Maceo...the bad dudes who took lunch money and laughed at your child agonies. Now left behind.

Or gone to: "a sense of coolness...and pass by a bar they call the Shalimar...." To remind us of the route we take from Jesus to J and B.

Kain yawns, eyes blazing toward some chick somewhere: "Hey you don't I know you I loved you once or was going to fucked you once or wanted

Theatre Review

by CLAYTON RILEY

to or something anyway I know you...." Without additional comment.

Felipe finds us beyond El Barrio and every place else we know, moving, shaking and bending into a nod now and then to insure that our new sanity has not caused us to forget those old moments of hallway madness, of being too lonesome in disappointment's rented room -- ring fourteen times and wait. Felipe, bringing us the clearest marriage between Puerto Rico and Harlem we may ever see, says, "...jazz is a woman's tongue stuck dead in your mouth," with no apologies apparently to Archie Shepp or Milford Graves or the world. Right on, Brother.

And Felipe at the revolution's gate flowing here/there--Spanish and English to say in part: "...A Rifle/a prayer, Conflict...but, I cry/and/I shoot/and/I cry/and/I shoot/and/-I cry...." And realizing that when the new genocide occurs, a new race of those not responsible will offer the excuse that they were in the library. (Where, for example, most of the SDS revolution will always be fought.)

While Brother David is constantly shifting the mood on us, pointing out that love is the arena of the vulnerable where even poets and even revolutionaries can and do fall. His contribution -- a major one -- lies in an ability to retain in a poem the quality of ancient beauties (fallen as they are upon hard times) without compromising his work, rendering it impotent...Black Woman, the world she has and should have, all of our fathers and what we think of them as opposed to what praises they deserve.

But retaining an edge to his voice in the poem "Prophet": "...there will be no more white christmases...." And of course his now nearly legendary "Die Nigga" in which we learn that, all myths aside, we can scream on ourselves more meaningfully than we can put the bad mouth on anybody else. And if you don't think "...niggas been dyin' niggas know how to die...niggas love dyin'..." bears a special witness to this hour, then check the first ten pages of the *Hamsterdam News*.

And then, only then, go and live with Concept-East for a while.

Letters to the Editor

Black Studies: A Cop-out?

Dear Mr. Watts:

Needless to say, I almost wholeheartedly concurred with Mr. Sundiata's article in the April issue of *LIBERATOR* magazine. It is too bad that many of the Afro-American(?) faculty do not advise the Black students as to the uselessness of "Black Studies, Negro History, Afro-American Experience, ad nauseam," as well as Mr. Sundiata has done. However, I am proud to report that in the case of Brooklyn College, there is one female political scientist, an Afro-American, Professor Inez Reid, who has pointed out some of the possibilities of getting "short-changed" with the so-called Black Studies.

Moreover, I have wondered why it is that the majority of students who are clamoring for these "studies" are receiving mucho bread from welfare or other government aid programs like the SEEK program. Why is it that many times the invertebrate administrators quickly give in to the demands of the day-session Black college students? Why don't they ask the evening students how *we* feel about those so-called Black Studies? There are quite a number of Afro-American evening students like myself who would love to see an end to "Black Studies," and to hear someone like Mr. Sundiata who possesses the intestinal fortitude to get Black college students to stop begging "the man"...and read for a change!

Prentiss Pratt
New York City

Dear Sir:

Since I have had no direct experience with Black Studies programs, I can only *hope* that I.K. Sundiata's bleak description of them is not truly representative. However, from what I have seen of publishers' material

catering to this sort of course, I have the sinking feeling he is right. I have been hoping that what students at Brandeis, S.F. State, etc., were fighting for was Point 5 of the Black Panther Party platform--"education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society...that teaches us our true history and our role in present-day society" -- and that only the administration-initiated Black Studies programs were assuring Black students that they shared equally with the Euro-American in the extermination of the Indian, the oppression of working people, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the genocide of the Vietnamese.

To teach Black history in terms of the Afro-American's contribution to a racist society is an example of a subtle and vicious exploitation intended to destroy the Black college graduate's commitment to his own people.

Peter Haraty
Winooski, Vermont

Selective Violence

Dear Mr. Watts:

In response to your editorial, "Selective Violence?" (June 1969), are you not condemning the whites for sharing in the same experience of American "due process" that we first began almost ten years ago? It was only through being "passive" that Blacks learned that such tactics do not bring meaningful results. Ludicrous as it may be for the "Flower Children" to face the Berkeley police, marching down the hill with fixed bayonets, with water hoses, such occurrences are necessary for the production of proper insights into the nature of the American system.

The enemy of the white masses is the Ruling Class. The enemy of the Blacks is the white masses and the Ruling Class. The Ruling Class covertly endorses the racism of the white masses as an escape mech-

anism against feelings of helplessness at the hands of a cruel system. To think that our problem will be solved by the elimination of racism is folly. Folly first because, approached in this perspective, the problem is unsolvable. Second because with the elimination of racism we will only be equally as oppressed as the white masses.

We should also be reminded that "Blacker Than Thou" attitudes have no place in our struggle. Men must eat and should not be condemned for working for the "bad guys." Some Blacks with jobs in the Establishment would sacrifice these jobs for more meaningful work, at lower pay; but such jobs are not forthcoming, even when actively sought.

A. Pindle, Jr.
Washington, D.C.

Open Letter to James Earl Jones

Dear Sir:

We would just like to say to John Cosby, Jr. (An Open Letter to James Earl Jones, *LIBERATOR*, June 1969) that he needn't be in such a hurry to call Jones an out-and-out liar for saying Black militants do not sanction any other marriage than that of Black with Black. A man cannot successfully fight the enemy if they reside in his own camp. You will note that a few conscientious Black intellectuals have made the transition from white to Black as they have become more and more involved in the liberation of their people.

As to the statement that Kenyatta himself has a white wife among his wives, Cosby obviously is overlooking the fact that Kenyatta is master of himself as well as of his country. When we are the masters we will be the first to give our approval, but right now brothers, wouldn't you say that we cannot afford to approve of any such contract?

Ruth Fairweather
Kaylene A. Richards
New York City

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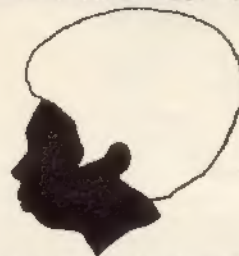
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